Mayor sees pros, cons in Tories; Scheer's plan has 'shortcomings' for cities, but is on right track with subways, crime

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Body

Toronto Mayor John Tory sees "shortcomings" in the federal Conservative platform for cities, but will not join his Vancouver counterpart in predicting "disaster" if Andrew Scheer is elected prime minister on Monday.

Tory was asked Thursday about Vancouver Mayor Kennedy Stewart's scathing assessment of Scheer's positions on issues important to his city in remarks to reporters and a series of tweets.

Stewart tweeted: "On housing, Andrew Scheer would move us backwards and make housing less affordable"; "On transit, Andrew Scheer's $18B cut to infrastructure would kill SkyTrain to UBC"; and "On opioids, Andrew Scheer would drag us back into court while more people die."

Tory, a former Ontario Progressive Conservative leader who has stressed he is non-partisan as mayor, says he will critique election policies but will not tell Torontonians who to vote for - or vote against - in the federal election.

Each parties' platform has strengths and weaknesses for Toronto, he told reporters after an unrelated event. But he raised some concerns about Scheer's pledges and how they will affect cities.

"There are shortcomings in their (Conservative) platform that are of concern to me," Tory said.

Cutting federal spending by $18 billion over 15 years by spreading the ruling Liberals' 12-year infrastructure program over the longer period "is not in the best interests of Toronto or cities across the country," Tory said, adding the Conservatives also "haven't said as much about housing as some of the other parties have."

And if Scheer's expressed doubts about safe-injection sites, which have proliferated under the Liberal government in response to the deadly opioid overdose epidemic, ever translate into federal restrictions, he will have Toronto to deal with, Tory said.

"Something that is saving lives in our city as we speak, hundreds of lives saved last year ... anybody who tries to take it back in time will have a fight from me," he said.

On the positive side, Tory noted, Scheer has pledged, if elected, to help fund the Ontario Line subway route in Toronto and the Yonge Street subway extension north of the city.

The mayor also lauded Scheer's comments as the best on ways to reform bail rules to try to help curb gun crime.

Scheer, battling for votes in the 905 region around Toronto, got a boost this month when Markham Mayor Frank Scarpitti and Richmond Hill Mayor Dave Barrow joined him for a campaign event announcing the Yonge subway and Ontario Line pledges.

The Star reported Wednesday that, if re-elected, Justin Trudeau's Liberals are pledging to honour any Toronto council request for funding of the Ontario Line, currently envisaged as 15.5-kilometre route from the Ontario Science Centre to the Exhibition GO station.

Tory also seemed to welcome the potential of a minority federal government, saying that could force compromise and action on issues including climate action and mental health supports.

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